

Native

Converts

AN ACCOUNT

OF THE

CONVERSION

OF A GOND MOONSHI.

COMPILED BY

AN OLD OFFICER.

ONE PENNY.

BOWNESS-ON-WINDERMERE:

T. S. ROBINSON, PRINTER.

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TIMES have changed since, some forty years ago and more, when the “dák walla” brought me a letter from my dear friend, Captain G., of the — Highlanders, much to this effect:—“My regiment is ordered to Kamptee. I do not understand a word of Hindustani. Can you secure me the services of a trustworthy butler who can speak English?”

Doubtless, in these more enlightened days, there are plenty of “trustworthy butlers” who can speak English perfectly, and I should not be surprised if captains of Highland regiments were equally proficient in Hindustani. It was not so in my day. Times have changed.

I replied: “Wait till you arrive in Kamptee and I will shew you where to cast your net in a likely quarter.”

On my friend's arrival I sent him to Joseph, the native Free Kirk catechist, to whom Captain G. made known his wants.

Joseph stood lost in thought for a while, and then delivered himself much as follows:—

“Shortly after my conversion to the faith of Jesus Christ, God gave me a good Christian wife. At the time of the birth of my first son, my wife and I were reading the book of Daniel, and we agreed that our first-born should be baptized by the name of Shadrach. In due time we were blessed with another little son, and we called him Meshach, and our third boy we called Abednego. My three sons have been brought up to be servants in European officers' families. Meshach is now out of place, if Master approves of Meshach's character, Master can have Meshach as Master's butler.”

Meshach was duly installed.

One day Captain G. was passing through the native “bazaar.” He saw a crowd surrounding a native speaker, who was standing on a “charpæ”—bedstead, and was addres-

sing the people with great earnestness. He continually lifted up his eyes and hands to heaven and repeated the words, "Eisá Mes-siah."

Captain G. thought he must be a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hurrying home, he called in the aid of Meshach as his interpreter. From Meshach's running comment, Captain G. gathered that an earnest simple evangelistic address was being delivered to the people. At the close, the following conversation took place between the preacher and my friend, through the medium of the interpreter.

Captain G.: "Who are you—where do you come from?"

Preacher: "I am a Gónd. I lived among the hills in the Gónd country. I was the village moonshi—schoolmaster. In my village there was a Bunya—a native merchant. He used to go down to Benares once a year—to the great annual "Mela"-fair—and when there, he transacted three very important pieces of business. He washed away all his

past sins and little cheatings in the holy waters of the Ganges, so that he was quite ready to begin a new score, having got rid of the accumulations of past years. He sold dear at Benares what he had bought cheap in the Gónd country, and he bought cheap at Benares what he sold dear upon his return home. He was a good-hearted fellow, and he was in the habit of bringing home presents for his friends. He was always better pleased when such little gifts cost him only a trifle, or better still when they were to be procured for nothing. One day in the Mela the Bunya came across a "Pâdre Sahib"—a missionary, who put a little book into his hand. It was graciously received, and as the Bunya accepted it, he thought 'Ah! this is just the thing for the Moonshi, and it has cost me nothing.' In due time the book was transferred to me. I took it into my hut. It proved to be the Gospel according to St. John. I read it with the deepest interest, and by the time that I had completed it, I was satisfied that the Christian religion was

the true religion. I held my peace and hid my treasure in my heart. . As the time drew on for the Bunya's annual visit to Benares, I said to him, 'If you should come across the Pádre Sahib again, will you ask him if there is any more of the little book you brought me last year, and, if there is, will you buy it for me?' The Lord graciously ordered it that the Bunya and the Pádre should meet once more, and my request was made known. The Pádre replied, 'Thank God I have just received a parcel containing every portion of the blessed Book, and your friend shall have the first copy issued as a free gift.' My joy was great when I found myself in possession of the whole Bible. I hid it in my hut and I hid it in my heart. As I studied it I learnt to pray. The more I prayed, the greater became my joy in the Word of God. All my spare time was occupied in reading my Bible. It was more precious to me than thousands of gold and silver, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. I soon discovered that privilege and responsibility ran on parallel

lines. If all this joy was mine in the possession of new life, I *must* make it known to others. Woe to me if I preached not the Gospel. I knew what I should have to suffer, but having counted the cost I delayed not to go forward. I came out of my hut, Bible in hand, and began to make known the good news. My wife and children turned against me. I had expected this, for it is written, 'A man's foes shall be they of his own household.' The Bunya who brought me the book turned against me, and my neighbours declared me mad. What was I to do? I found that the good Book had a direction for me in every emergency. It said, 'When they persecute you in one city flee ye to another', and so I did. I put up a change of raiment in a bundle, and with my precious Bible as my companion, I set forth to preach the Gospel wherever I could obtain a hearing."

Captain G.: "With what Society are you in connexion? Who employs you to carry on this good work?"

Preacher: "I do not understand the meaning of the word Society."

It was explained to him.

Preacher: "I am not associated with any Society."

Captain G.: "I suppose then that you are a rich man, or, at all events, that you have private means?"

Preacher: "'A rich man!' I should think I am a rich man. If I am not a rich man I know not who is. I have God for my Father, I have Jesus for my Saviour, and I have the Holy Spirit for my Comforter. What more do I want? You see that curry and rice upon the fire. These kind friends are cooking it for me. You see this charpæ which I have turned into a pulpit. As soon as I have done talking to you I shall eat that curry and then I shall lie down upon this charpæ, and then I hope to have a good sleep, wake up refreshed, and travel on to the next town, telling the same blessed news to all who will hear me, and this I hope to do so long as life shall last."

The special interest which attaches to the foregoing incident is to be found in tracing the connecting links in the chain of providential leadings.

In the unknown Moonshi of an obscure Gónd village God had selected "a chosen vessel" to do a great work, "to bear His name before the Gentiles," and to suffer great things for His name's sake.

An instrument was needed in the connecting link of circumstances to carry out God's purposes, and one was forthcoming in the person of the Bunya, who had as little conception that he was but a tool in the hands of the true God as had the inanimate scarlet line, which was long enough and strong enough, and of the colour which was required to effect the escape of the spies, and secure the safety of Rahab's household.

It was by no mere chance that the Bunya, among the thousands of persons attending the Mela, should come across the Pádre Sahib, nor that he should give him a copy

of the Gospel according to St. John; which was used in the first instance to arouse the attention, and then to reveal to the Moonshi the more excellent way.

The hunger and thirst thus created for yet more light and knowledge which could only be satisfied by the possession of the whole book was anticipated and provided for at the right time, in all probability through the agency of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which is circulating the Word of God at the rate of nearly four millions of copies annually in three hundred and twenty languages.

My reader, how is it with you?

In all human probability you who are reading these lines have had vastly greater opportunities than the Moonshi of the Gónd village in the foregoing story.

The study of the Word of God changed the whole current of that man's life.

Christianity was to him a great practical reality. He not only believed; I have very little doubt you too believe—almost every-

body in England *believes*—but he *trusted*. Do you?

He became an earnest, humble, faithful, and successful labourer in his Master's vineyard. Are you?

He gave up everything that men hold dear—wife, children, home, that he might witness for Christ. Have you?

Truly this black man, upon whom we are tempted to look down as vastly our inferior, puts us to shame by his fidelity to his commission. We hear a good deal in the present day about Apostolical Succession. I firmly believe in it after this sort, and adduce my friend the Gónd Moonshi as a veritable successor of the Apostles—one with them in spirit—in holy consecration to God's service, and as truly called of God to the exercise of the ministry entrusted to him as were Paul, Peter, or John of blessed memory.

Where there is life you expect to see the functions of life in active exercise, and you are not disappointed.

Where life is vigorous you are not sur-

prised to witness the feats of the athlete and gymnast, the prowess of the wrestler, or the speed of the runner.

A dead man is disqualified, because he is dead, from entering the lists.

Once more I ask you—Are you a living Christian? To be without life (Ephesians, ii., 12), is to be without Christ, without God, without hope. The blessed Lord has said, (John, x., 10), “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

W. D. CHAPMAN,
Late Madras Staff Corps.



